UCR | Human Resources

Resource Guide:
Writing a Winning Résumé

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What is a Résumé?

A résumé is a marketing tool which used to market yourself to potential employers. It is also used to summarize and emphasis your accomplishments, focusing on your future–not your past. The main purpose of a résumé is to entice potential employers into setting up an interview.

Objectives of a Résumé

The objective of a résumé is to get an interview. A résumé is your first and perhaps only opportunity to sell yourself to a potential employer. Hiring managers may have limited time to review all the résumés they receive so it is important to make a good first impression.

Developing Your Résumé

Before you sit down to write your résumé, take some time to think about the applicable skills, abilities, and experiences you feel are important to the type of job you want. Create a list of accomplishments that illustrate your value, show your competency, and highlight your abilities. Think of action verbs and descriptive adjectives that best describe you and your past experiences. Analyze experience and relevant skill areas: things you can do, roles you've taken, working conditions you excel in, things you know, and how you describe your values and priorities.

Basic Components

There are basic components all résumés should include. Your résumé, regardless of the job you are applying to, should include:

- Contact Information
- Work History
- Education
- References
- Awards, honors or skills and training

While there is a certain hierarchy to how these components should be organized, there is flexibility depending on what information is most relevant to you and the job you are applying to.

Contact Information

Your contact information should be placed in a prominent and clear position. Make sure that all the information is up to date and correct. You should include the following information:

- Your full name
- Your e-mail address*
- Your permanent address
- Your local or campus address (if applicable)
- Your phone number(s)
- Your web address/URL (if applicable)**

*Avoid using unprofessional or questionable email addresses. Make sure the email address you are providing is permanent and one you check often. With current technology many jobs may not only have you apply online, they may use email as the primary method of contacting you.

**Avoid using personal blogs, social media profiles, or sites that do not reflect your professional life.

An Objective Statement (Optional)

The objective appears near the top of your résumé and tells the reader about your career goals and/or expresses interest in a specific job or vacancy. The objective gives direction and focus to your résumé. However, the industry is slowly moving away from these.

Highlights of Qualifications

This section highlighted near the top of your résumé should reflect a complete, bulleted list of your most significant career achievements that benefited an employer. (We suggest you narrow the list down to the top 5). Achievements should be direct and to the point, contain measurable information, and emphasize positive results. Most achievement summaries consist of four parts which do not necessarily have to follow the order listed below:

- A description of the event
- What made it important?
- What you did to make it happen?
- The measurable results

Work History or Education?

Often the next section on your résumé should be dedicated to your work history or job experience. However, in some cases it may be appropriate to put education before your work history. It is up to you to decide which is more relevant to your situation or the job you are applying to.

For instance:

- If you have a number of years experience relevant to the job or industry which you are applying to or when your experience is closely aligned to the job requirements of a position, you may wish to place work experience before education. In these cases it is beneficial to put emphasis on your work experience and job accomplishments. Often recruiters want to know up front if you have the experience they require and if you have held a stable position.
- However, depending on how important education is to your field or to the position you are applying to, you may wish to place education before work history. If you are a recent graduate, have less related experience (less than two years) and more relevant education. Education would also come first if the job you are applying to requires specific training or course work. If you are changing careers you may wish to show you have pursued education to support this transition.

It is up to you to decide which is more important to the job you want.

Experience/Work History

This section should be used to list your work history or experience. You will want to list this in reverse chronological order starting with your most recent or most relevant job experience. Include information such as:

- Job title
- Company name and location
- Dates
- Duties performed

Make sure this section is easy to read with appropriate formatting–spacing, bullets, etc. Use action verbs to highlight your accomplishment. The duties you preformed, responsibilities you held, and achievements you gained are more important than job titles. Job titles and classifications vary from place to place so it is important to outline exactly what you did within individual positions. If your job title does not appropriately convey your position when compared with your actual duties, use a more descriptive title after your official title.

When explaining the duties you performed describe in detail what you did and what equipment/tools you used. Use industry terminology if appropriate. Identify the personal strengths and skills you used to achieve your accomplishments within that position. Also, be sure to quantify the results of your actions.

Do not include your reasons for leaving a job or your salary unless this information is specifically asked for by the employer. Not every work experience or job must be a paid position in order to be included; put relevant volunteer work in this section, as long as it is pertinent.

Depending on how long you have been in the work force or how many positions you have held there may be a limit to the jobs you wish to include on your résumé. It is good practice to keep your résumé no longer than two pages, which means you may not be able to list every job you've ever held. Jobs that took place over ten or fifteen years ago or that are irrelevant to the industry you are applying to, can be left off. If employers want more, they will ask for that information separately.

Education, Certifications, and Licenses

Similar to the work history section list your education in reverse chronological order starting with your most recent or highest level of education. Depending on relevance, how far along you are in your professional career, or how far you have gone in your education it is unlikely your high school information is necessary. If you have your Associate or Bachelor's degree, it is obvious you completed the equivalent of a high school diploma.

You should include the following information:

- Name of degree (spelled out: Bachelor of _____, etc) in (name of Major)
- Name of university, city/state of university
- Graduation year (unless you graduated more than about 15 years ago)
- Additional information, such as minor and GPA (optional)
- If you haven't graduated yet, list your prospective year of graduation

There are other kinds of education that may be specific to the type of position you are looking for, such as continuing education, trainings, certifications or licenses, special training seminars, or vocational courses. Include these as you see fit and as they are relevant to the position.

Accomplishments, Activities, Awards, and Skills

These next areas depend on what you think is important to the role/position you are seeking. You might list skills that make you unique, a list of programs you have used or are familiar with. Be specific in describing your special skills; name computer programs you've used, how long you have studied a foreign language, dates of military service, etc.

Also, if you have received particular honors or awards that may interest employers you may add a section for them. Avoid listing hobbies and personal information.

Just remember to keep it all relevant, if the information you are listing has no importance to the position then you are wasting valuable space and the hiring manager may feel you are wasting their time.

References

At the end of your résumé you will want to list the names and contact information of individuals who are willing to refer you to potential employers. These should be people you have worked with in some capacity– they should be able to provide professional references rather than much character references. Be sure to ask individuals beforehand if you can list them as a reference and give out their contact information, as well as let them know they may potentially be contacted.

List the following information:

- Name
- Job title or relation to you
- Phone number and/or email address

List three or more references depending on the space you have available. It is not necessary you list the names and contact information if you do not have space or prefer not to give that information; simply state that references are available upon request.

Formatting Your Résumé

It is important that your information is clearly laid out in order to be easily and quickly reviewed. Think of your résumé as valuable real estate, and make sure you are using that real estate the best way you can.

A résumé should be one or two pages long. If you are a senior-level manager/executive or applying for a teaching position, your résumé may be longer or you may be asked to provide a curricula vita. If your résumé extends to a second page but does not fill more than half of that extra page, consider reformatting. Empty space looks sloppy and you want your résumé to look well planned out.

Your résumé should be well balanced with an equal amount of text and white space. This is pleasing to the eye and will make your résumé appear clean and professional. Readers typically read top to bottom and left to right, so place information accordingly. Be sure to leave a clear margin around your page, which looks neat and gives the employer space to make notes.

Use basic clear fonts, such as Times New Roman or Arial. Avoid using more than one font. Generally keep most information at a size of 12pt. Do not use color fonts or paper. Use headlines, bolding, and bullets to clearly

define sections of your résumé and information hierarchy. Use spacing to break up individual sections of your résumé such as education and work history. Do not justify your text because this could create odd spacing between words. It is better to stick with the standard left aligned paragraphs.

There are many programs that offer different templates for résumés. For example Microsoft Word offers a variety of templates in which you can simply plug in your information (many templates already have space holding information in them which is meant to be replaced, just be sure you replace all of this information with your own). When choosing a template or formatting your own résumé, remember to keep things simple and neat. Keep sections clearly defined.

Distributing Your Résumé

It is best to have your résumé saved as a Adobe PDF or simple text document, since these formats are generally compatible universally. You may want to have a simple text version of your résumé that can easily be copy/pasted into the body of an email or a web application. When sending a résumé electronically avoid underlines, bolded words, and italics. Also avoid using graphics, boxes, or columns as these do not always translate from computer to computer. Printing out a hard copy to keep on file is always a good idea.

Protecting Yourself

By law there is certain personal information an employer cannot ask applicants. In some instances an application may ask for your race, age, gender, marital status, if you have a disability or are a veteran, etc. but these sections should be optional and you should not feel pressured to answer these questions. Sometimes this information is collected for statistical purposes only. Do not to include any of these on your résumé.

Keep in mind you have no idea who will be seeing your résumé, and online applications may not be secure. Avoid putting certain personal information on your résumé or an application. Never put your Social Security number on anything, particularly if you are transmitting it over the Internet. A Social Security number is something you can provide your employer with once hired. Use your own judgment on the information you feel comfortable revealing.

The Cover Letter

Ideally you will tailor your résumé to each job you are applying to, but often this is not the case. After you have developed a well organized and professional résumé it is unlikely you will wish to or have the time to gear your résumé towards every job you apply to (though in some cases you may wish to have multiple résumés if you are applying to jobs in vastly different fields). This is why a cover letter is so important. A cover letter is a personal statement of interest in a particular position or company. It should be written specific to the job or company you are applying to and should not exceed one page.

Depending on the current job market or the interest in a specific position an employer may not have enough time to review every résumé sent in. This is where a well written cover letter comes into play. Think of a cover letter as a preview of your résumé or an advertisement that will entice employers to keep reading. It is an opportunity to personalize your résumé and target your skills towards a single employer. Do some of the work for the employer: tell them how you are qualified for this particular position and why you are right for the job. It pays to do your research on a company or job before writing your cover letter.

You should organize your letter with the following:

- Statement of purpose: Name the position to which you are applying and how/where you learned of the position or company.
- Explanation of qualifications: Explain why you are interested in working for this employer. Emphasize the qualifications you particularly want the employer to notice and how they are relevant to the position or company. Do not be overly repetitive of information in your résumé.
- Closing statement: State your availability to further discuss employment opportunities and refer them to your enclosed résumé for more information.

Be sure to include contact information on your cover letter as well.

Disclaimer

This guide is meant to be used as a helpful tool when writing your résumé but none of the information is to be taken as a set standard. There are many ways in which to write and format a résumé and each person's résumé will be different. Your résumé should reflect who you are as a professional.

Useful Links

Action Verbs

Useful Phrases

Adjectives

Check List

Most Frequent Résumé Mistakes

Most Frequent Résumé Mistakes

- **Including typos and other spelling or grammatical errors:** Before you send out your résumé, make sure you have proofread it several times. Many hiring managers will automatically throw away a résumé that has typos or other errors.
- **Lengthy resume:** Surveyed managers reported that résumé only get a 15 second review.
- **No dates listed:** From a recruiter's perspective, candidates eliminate dates on their résumé for only one reason: to hide information, such as a history of job-hopping or a long period of unemployment.
- **Sending a resume without a cover letter:** Résumé and cover letters should be inseparable. Make sure you don't give up your chance to really sell yourself with a cover letter.
- **Poorly organized:** Information on a résumé should be listed in order of importance to the reader. If your résumé is difficult to read or key information is buried, it's more likely to be cast aside.
- **Lying:** Employers reported they are on the lookout for lies or serious exaggerated claims made in people's résumés. Common deceptions include accomplishments, salary, or size of the team managed
- **Using really small fonts:** Really small fonts are hard to read and don't photocopy as well (That applies to your address block as well). What's too small? Generally don't go smaller than a 10 point
- **Really wide margins with content squeezed in the middle:** Your margins should be at least one half inch. You really don't need more than one inch.
- **Too personal:** If your Web site includes photos of your cat or your personal blog about what you did over the weekend, don't steer prospective employers there by including it on your résumé. Keep your personal and your professional life separate in order to be taken seriously.
- **Writing in the first person:** Your résumé is not a personal correspondence, and should not include words such as "I," "My," and "Me." Save the first person pronouns for your cover letter.

Your Résumé Check List

- [ ] Is my contact information prominently displayed and correct?
- [ ] Is my résumé pleasing to the eye, with an easy-to-read font, and a good layout?
- [ ] If I have used a preset template, have I replaced all the template information with my own?
- [ ] Have I carefully reviewed for typos; spelling, punctuation and grammar mistakes?
- [ ] Is the information listed in order of relevance to the position?
- [ ] Are my qualifications and experiences specific?
- [ ] Do I use action verbs?
- [ ] Does my résumé fit into two pages? Do I use a full page or is there too much white space left on the second page?
- [ ] Is the contact information for my references correct?
- [ ] Have I made any common mistakes?

Additional Resources

Action Verbs

- Action verbs make the résumé come alive.
- Try to use a variety of action verbs rather than repeating the same few.
- Choose the words that most appropriately describe your responsibilities:

Accelerated	Constructed	Envisioned	Inspected	Originated	Reconciled	Sponsored
Accomplished	Consulted	Established	Inspired	Overcame	Recognized	Stabilized
Achieved	Contributed	Estimated	Installed	Overhauled	Recommended	Staffed
Acquired	Controlled	Evaluated	Instituted	Oversaw	Recruited	Standardized
Addressed	Converted	Examined	Instructed	Officiated	Redesigned	Started
Administered	Cooperated	Exceeded	Insured	Operated	Regulated	Streamlined
Advanced	Coordinated	Executed	Integrated	Ordered	Reinforced	Strengthened
Advised	Created	Exercised	Intensified	Organized	Related	Structured
Advocated	Cultivated	Exhibited	Interpreted	Oriented	Reported	Studied
Allocated	Decentralized	Expanded	Interviewed	Originated	Renegotiated	Succeeded
Analyzed	Decided	Experienced	Introduced	Overcame	Reorganized	Suggested
Anticipated	Decreased	Extended	Invented	Overhauled	Represented	Summarized
Applied	Defined	Extracted	Invested	Oversaw	Researched	Supervised
Appointed	Delegated	Facilitated	Investigated	Participated	Reshaped	Supported
Appraised	Delivered	Finalized	Judged	Perceived	Resolved	Surpassed
Appreciated	Demonstrated	Financed	Justified	Perfected	Responded to	Surveyed
Approved	Designated	Forecasted	Launched	Performed	Restored	Sustained
Arranged	Designed	Formulated	Led	Piloted	Revamped	Tailored
Assessed	Detailed	Formalized	Lightened	Pioneered	Reviewed	Taught
Assigned	Determined	Founded	Liquidated	Planned	Revised	Tested
Attained	Devised	Fulfilled	Located	Prepared	Revitalized	Tightened
Audited	Directed	Generated	Managed	Presented	Revived	Traded
Broadened	Discovered	Governed	Manufactured	Presided	Satisfied	Trained
Budgeted	Displayed	Guided	Marketed	Prevented	Saved	Transacted
Built	Distributed	Handled	Mastered	Processed	Scheduled	Transferred
Calculated	Documented	Headed	Mobilized	Procured	Secured	Transformed
Centralized	Doubled	Helped	Modified	Produced	Selected	Translated
Clarified	Earned	Hired	Monitored	Programmed	Served	Trimmed
Collaborated	Edited	Identified	Motivated	Promoted	Set up	Uncovered
Combined	Educated	Implemented	Negotiated	Proposed	Settled	Undertook
Commanded	Employed	Improved	Normalized	Proved	Shaped	Unified
Completed	Encouraged	Improvised	Obtained	Provided	Showed	Used
Composed	Energized	Increased	Officiated	Published	Simplified	Utilized
Conducted	Enforced	Influenced	Operated	Purchased	Solved	Verified
Connected	Engineered	Initiated	Organized	Re-established	Sparked	Widened
Consolidated	Enhanced	Innovated	Oriented	Realized	Specified	Wrote

Useful Phrases

The following phrases may help you organize your accomplishment statements for both résumé and employment correspondence.

When choosing the phrase that best describes the situation, read it over once or twice in the context of the sentence to be certain that the selection is correct, and that the phrase reads well.

- Acted/Functioned as...
- Consistently...
- Company engaged in...
- Contracted/Subcontracted by... to...
- Covered assigned territory consisting of...
- Demonstrated expertise in...
- Extensively trained in...
- Extensively involved in...
- Ensured maximum/optimum/minimum...
- Exceeded by...
- Honored as...
- Initially employed to/Joined organization to...
- Interacted heavily with...
- More than . . . years' extensive/Diverse experience in...
- Newly established company/Entity engaged in...
- Proven track record of/in...
- Provided technical assistance to...
- Promoted to...
- Promoted from... to...
- Reported to/Reported directly to...
- Specialized in...
- Selected as/Elected to...

Adjectives

Not only is it important to be honest and pick adjectives that truly reflect your personality, work ethic, etc., it is also important to think of adjectives that describe your traits and are suitable for the job you are apply for. These may be words you wish to use in your résumé and could also be used if an employer asks you to describe yourself with a few adjectives during an interview.

Alert	Ambitious	Brave	Bright	Calm
Capable	Cheerful	Confident	Cooperative	Courageous
Credible	Cultured	Decisive	Delightful	Detailed
Determined	Diligent	Discreet	Dynamic	Eager
Efficient	Eminent	Encouraging	Energetic	Entertaining
Enthusiastic	Excellent	Fair	Faithful	Fearless
Frank	Friendly	Generous	Helpful	Honorable
Impartial	Industrious	Instinctive	Kind	Knowledgeable
Likeable	Productive	Punctual	Responsible	Self-assured
Sincere	Talented	Thrifty	Tough	Trustworthy
Unbiased	Upbeat	Willing	Wise	Witty

Exercises

Here are some exercises to help get you ready for writing your résumé.

List your transferable skills or abilities:

Now that you have some idea of how to use action verbs, emphasize skills and abilities have you used in your current position or life that will be useful to your future career utilizing action verbs. What communication skills do you have? What kind of planning or organizing have you done? Are you good at making decisions? Are you a good editor? Remember to be specific.

When mentioning these skills and abilities on your résumé portray them so they support what you would be doing in the job you are applying to or job you ultimately want.

Make a list of accomplishments achieved in your last position:

Think about the problems you've met and the solutions you came up with. What did you do that you are most proud of? Did you influence change? Do something better, faster, or cheaper? Did you demonstrate leadership qualities? Be sure to include what did you did, how you did it, and what the results were.

Make a list of qualities or actions necessary for the job you are applying to:

Put yourself in the hiring manager's shoes. What qualities do you think they are looking for in a candidate? What skills is the person for this position going to possess? What will this person need to do?

Brief example of a résumé

Jane Smith

1122 University Ave, Redlands, CA 92373 JSmith@gmail.com (555) 956-5562

QUALIFICATIONS

- Over six years progressively responsible Student Affairs experience
- Extensive experience working with Student Life organizations, Leadership programs, and Living Learning Programs
- Strong background in targeted programming and large scale event planning
- Skilled in staff recruitment, hiring, training, and supervision
- Strong ability to work collaboratively and establish quality relationships with student leaders, faculty, staff, and larger community

EDUCATION

- **Master of Education**, College Student Affairs **May 2002**
  Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA
- **Bachelor of Science**, Health Administration and Planning, with a minor in Business **June 1999**
  California State University, San Bernardino, CA

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Coordinator, Student Organizations **February 2006 - Present**

Student Life, University of California, Riverside, CA

- Responsible for indirect advisement for more than 250 student organizations
- Participated on the First Year Success Series committee
- Facilitated and organized Applied Leaders, a six week leadership development course in spring 2007
- Facilitated and organized Beyond Basics, a six week student organization administration course in winter 2007
- Responsible for the various aspects of organization registration for over 200 student organizations
- Coordination of the 2006 orientation program for UCR transfer students
- Supported various aspects of UCR's Orientation program
- Presented workshops on various topics: Officer Transition, Event Planning, Financial Management and Fundraising
- Directly advise and support the following student organizations:
  - National Pan-Hellenic Council, oversees historical African American Greek organizations
  - Omicron Delta Kappa, Leadership Honor Society UCR Circle
  - The National Society of Collegiate Scholars UCR Chapter
  - Alpha Pi Sigma, Latina Sorority

Coordinator of Student Development **August 2002 - June 2005**

Housing and Residential Life, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, CA

- Managed residential communities up to 800 residents.
- Implemented Living Learning Program, working with the Associate Deans of the Orfalea College of Business and College of Architecture and Environmental Design by providing programs and services in the residential community to assist the residents in their academics (2002-2004)
- Chaired Academic Excellence Program Team consisting of representatives from academic advising, career services, student academic services, and the library (2002-2004)
- Implemented and assisted in development of new Sophomore Success Learning community focusing on academic success and retention
- Directly supervised up to 12 resident advisors, 6 student assistants, and 1 student manager
- Acted as community discipline officer; collaborated with judicial affairs and campus police when necessary
- Met with residents who were placed on academic probation to provide additional support and resources
- Oversaw the Community Service programs for 3,600

Resident Coordinator **August 2001 - July 2002**

Housing and Residential Life, California State University, San Bernardino, CA

- Opened and managed new apartment complex for 600 students; First apartment complex on campus
- Assisted in developing policies and procedures for the new complex
- Supervised 14 Resident Advisors
- Coordinated Fall training for 2 Programming Interns, 14 Resident Advisors, and 5 Community Programmers
- Advised student group that created, organized, and managed various aspects of the department's Welcome Week for over 1,000 residents
- Coordinated Recruitment and Selection process for Resident Advisor Staff;
- Preformed crisis response to 1000 residents
- Supervised two Programming Interns and indirectly supervised 5 Community Programmers
- Responsible for a programming budget

RELATED EXPERIENCE

Instructor **November 2000 - June 2001**

Orange County Department of Education, Outdoor Science School, Forest Falls, CA

- Supervised 10-12 year-old students in a residential setting
- Instructed environmental education activities
- Lead experiential science activities in the outdoors on hiking trails